

DeKalb Animal Services Task Force



**Presentation to
DeKalb County
Board of Commissioners
October 18, 2011**

DeKalb Comparison in 20 County Region



2005

#2 out of 20 - Cost per animal

#3 out of 20 - Animals impounded

#18 out of 20 - Animals surviving

#19 out of 20 - Adoption rate

Mission of the Task Force



The DeKalb Animal Services Task Force was established by the DeKalb Governing Authority to identify short and long term strategies that will:

1. Improve quality of life for animals in DeKalb County
2. Reduce the numbers of healthy or treatable animals euthanized in the care of DeKalb County



Objectives for Today's Meeting



- ✓ Present research efforts to date
- ✓ Findings and conclusions
- ✓ National best practices
- ✓ Recommendations
- ✓ Next steps

Task Force Research



- ✓ 6 public meetings
- ✓ Over 25 interviews of current and former staff
- ✓ Public official and public survey
- ✓ Reviewed code, mission statement, SOPs
- ✓ Identified internal and external partners and points of interaction
- ✓ Observed operations in facility and in the field
- ✓ Researched best practices of highly successful operations

71% of DeKalb County Households Have Pets



Households with Pets

Pet Population

Dogs

102,954

174,911

Cats

89,669

197,328

Total

192,623

372,239

Estimate calculated by formula from the American Veterinary Medical Association. The 2010 Census reports a total of 270, 124 households in DeKalb County.

Findings: Animals Under DeKalb County Care



2008-2010

25,662 Animals Taken into DeKalb Animal Shelter

- ✓ 3% were found dead in the facility (719)
- ✓ 7% are unaccounted for (2,370)
- ✓ 8% were reclaimed by their owners (2,060)
- ✓ 10% were adopted (2,605)
- ✓ 12% were taken by rescue groups (3,154)
- ✓ 60% were euthanized (15,676)

Findings : The Facility



The Facility is a Health and Safety Hazard to Humans and Animals

- ✓ Major problems with pests
- ✓ Air conditioning, temporary unit and generators used, costing \$115,000 each year
- ✓ Standing water – promotes spread of disease as well as growth of bacteria and mold
- ✓ No hot or pressurized water for cleaning
- ✓ Drains constantly clogged
- ✓ Odor is overwhelming

Findings : The Facility



- ✓ Design not supportive of function or scale of operation
- ✓ Appearance, location, conditions, noise and smell undermine public interest, employee morale and volunteer recruitment

Findings: Kennel



- ✓ Kennel care function marginalized at every level
- ✓ Animal cages often filthy -- urine and feces in food/water bowls
- ✓ Major problem with pests
- ✓ Staffing level in kennel too low
- ✓ Insufficient staffing and poor communications occasionally lead to animals left without food/water and untreated for injuries/illness
- ✓ The demoralizing effects on the staff of the conditions and the use of euthanasia lead to poor morale and a desire to separate themselves from the animals

Findings : Enforcement



- ✓ Highlight of Animal Services function
- ✓ Cruelty Investigation Unit unique in State
- ✓ Animal cruelty is a gateway crime and a tell-tale sign of domestic abuse and other criminal behavior
- ✓ Frequent reports from public of slow or no response
- ✓ Occasional reports from the public of threatening behavior

Findings: Staffing



Employment by Type	Number of Employees
Adoption	1
Cruelty	3
Administration	9
Kennel	10
Field Enforcement	13
Total	36

- Personnel expense 65% of total budget
- All positions are full time
- Handled ~ 28,000 calls in 2010
- Handled ~ 8,500 animals in 2010 (850/person in kennel)

Findings: Volunteers



- ✓ Volunteer service a tremendous resource in other places
- ✓ Facility conditions and extensive practice of euthanasia a barrier to recruitment in DeKalb
- ✓ Insufficient staffing levels prevent ability to provide training and supervision to volunteers

Findings: Partners



- ✓ Public Safety/Police
- ✓ Facilities Department
- ✓ Purchasing Department
- ✓ District Attorney
- ✓ Solicitor General
- ✓ Recorder's Court
- ✓ Health Department
- ✓ Code Enforcement
- ✓ Sanitation
- ✓ Fleet Management
- ✓ Human Resources
- ✓ DeKalb Municipalities
- ✓ State of Georgia,
Department of
Agriculture
- ✓ Hospital Systems
- ✓ Rescue Groups

National Survey Results for High Performers



- ✓ Tompkins County, Ithaca, New York
- ✓ Travis County, Austin, Texas
- ✓ Washoe County, Reno, Nevada
- ✓ Richmond, Virginia

Best Practices of Highly Successful Shelters



Prevention

- High Volume, Low Cost Spay and Neuter
- Feral Cat Trap/Neuter/Return

New Resources

- Public Relations
- Community Engagement
- Volunteers
- Technology

Leadership

Shelter Care

- Medical
- Behavioral

Home-Finding

- Proactive Redemption
- Adoption
- Foster Care
- Rescue Groups
- Retention

Recommendations: Change in Intent!



New Philosophy

Reactive Posture → Proactive Mindset

Euthanasia Strategy → Life-Saving Mission

Warehousing Function → Home Finding Solutions

New Purpose

- ✓ Operational Policy and Practices
- ✓ Correct Existing Conditions
- ✓ Best Practices

New Place

- ✓ Health & Safety for All
- ✓ Attractive to Public & Volunteers
- ✓ Partnership with DeKalb Schools

Recommendations: Facility



- ✓ New facility or renovated facility (permanent solution)
 - ❑ Appropriate design and construction materials
 - ❑ Space which reflects new mission
 - ❑ Location, location, location

- ✓ Make wholesale improvements to existing facility (interim step)
 - ❑ Implement best practices in sheltering animals
 - ❑ Establish new protocols for maintenance
 - ❑ Permanent air conditioning system for kennel area

- ✓ Make immediate provision for significant maintenance to current facility (interim step)

- ✓ Consider satellite adoption facilities in market-conscious locations (interim/permanent step)

Recommendations: Funding



New or expanded sources of revenue:

- ✓ Increase license fee structure (above current fees of \$5 for altered, \$15 for unaltered pets)
- ✓ Increase license fee collections (<10% registered currently)
- ✓ Increase citation collections (\$63,719 in 2010)
- ✓ Increase adoption fees associated with dramatic increase in adoptions
- ✓ New service fees associated with low cost veterinary services
- ✓ New funding from private foundations and grants when lifesaving becomes intent and improvements are made

Recommendations: Policy



- ✓ Incorporate lifesaving and quality of life in mission
- ✓ Incentivize owners to spay and neuter pets
- ✓ Incentivize good owner behavior
- ✓ Allow for increased number of household pets
- ✓ Improve effectiveness of enforcement through technical changes to code
- ✓ Strengthen bite quarantine provisions

Recommendations: Operations



- ✓ Change hours and days of operation for public convenience
- ✓ Improve response times to public calls
- ✓ Adopt policies that promote adoption, reclaim and rescue
- ✓ Add staffing to emphasize adoption and animal care
- ✓ Increase role of volunteers
- ✓ Increase convictions for cruelty and code violations
- ✓ Increase citizen education
- ✓ Change SOPs and conduct staff training program
- ✓ Cross train all staff
- ✓ Upgrade technology equipment and software and conduct staff training

Next Steps



✓ Short Term (Less than 1 Year)

- ❑ Major maintenance and cleaning of facility
- ❑ Adopt policy changes to reflect new lifesaving mission
- ❑ Adopt changes to fee structure and increase collections
- ❑ Install HVAC unit and end practice of leasing air conditioning for kennel
- ❑ Establish new SOPs based on best practices
- ❑ Establish DeKalb Improves the Lives of Animals (DILA) Oversight Committee
- ❑ Revise code provisions to reflect new mission
- ❑ Begin public education programs
- ❑ Complete Final Report

✓ Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

- ❑ Identify funding for new facility at new location
- ❑ Consider value associated with outsourcing

“No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come.”

Victor Hugo



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